

## Best Practices

*The four practices every peer reviewer should know and use.*

1. **Pay attention to the page.** A good rule of thumb in reviewing is to first "put it in your own words." For example, for an argument essay, begin by summarizing the author's position; for a narrative essay, start by echoing what you think the writer is saying about the significance of the event. As a peer reviewer, your task is not to evaluate the essay as a teacher would but to act as a mirror, reflecting back what you see. Rather than making a judgment about whether something is good or bad, stay close to the page, making observations on specific words and paragraphs so that the reviewer can hear how you understand them. Also, make sure to focus on the right things: especially when you are looking at the early stages of a draft, the substance of the paper matters much more than grammatical mistakes.

2. **Think alongside the writer.** You can do this by following a writer's thinking off the page—articulating a thought that is almost said or only implied—or by extending or challenging the writer's point of view with reasons and examples. You might begin by asking yourself questions like these: If I heard this topic mentioned in another situation, what would I expect the conversation to include? If I had not read this draft, what order would I expect these ideas to follow?

3. **Talk the peer review talk.** Knowing and using terms such as thesis, organization, purpose, perspective, and audience will help you focus on global concerns and be specific. Knowing and occasionally drawing on tried-and-true formulas for peer review commentary will help you if you get stuck. Here are some examples:

- "Here I expected \_\_\_\_\_ instead of \_\_\_\_\_. Why did you make that choice?"
- "You got my attention here by \_\_\_\_\_."
- "What about \_\_\_\_\_? There are other perspectives on this topic."

4. **Be there for your peers.** You can do this by playing the roles of audience member, fellow writer, and good critic. Give your peers a powerful sense of purpose and audience by approaching each paper not as an assignment, but as an authentic piece of writing. Give each paper the care it deserves by putting yourself in the writer's shoes and asking yourself, "As a writer, what comments and approaches have I found most helpful?" Finally, give your peers the critical response they need with serious and precise evaluations of the work before you.

## The Lingo

*from Bedford/St. Martins Re:Writing plus*

**Argument** – A claim that can be supported with reasons and evidence.

**Audience** – The reader(s) for whom the essay is intended.

**Body** – The middle section of an essay that develops and supports the essay's thesis.

**Brainstorming** – An idea-generating invention technique that encourages writers to write down every fact or idea related to a particular topic that comes to mind.

**Coherence** – The logical and orderly relationship between all pieces of an essay that helps the essay make sense.

**Common knowledge** – Widely available and understood factual information.

**Conclusion** – The final, closing sentences or paragraphs of an essay that summarize the argument, suggest a solution, and offer some resolution.

**Digression** – A thought that strays from the main point of the essay.

**Documentation** – Formal credit given to the essay's sources.

**Essay** – A short piece of nonfiction writing that expresses and then supports an idea or an argument.

**Evidence** – Support for a claim, composed of facts and opinions.

**Example** – Evidence offered to illustrate a point.

**Fallacy** – A seemingly logical but actually flawed or distorted statement.

**Focus** – The essay's central idea or scope.

**Forecast/Foreshadow** – To hint at an idea that will emerge later in the essay.

**Introduction** – The opening sentences or paragraphs of an essay that set a tone, identify a subject, and often include the thesis and argument.

**Invention** – The initial writing state wherein the author explores his or her subject, comes up with an idea, and begins to develop an argument.

**Organization** – The way an essay is constructed. Its parts should be arranged so that introduction, body, and conclusion flow well from one to the other, with clear topic sentences and effective transitions.

**Paragraph** – The essay's basic unit, usually consisting of a topic sentence followed by one or more sentences that support the idea presented in the topic sentence.

**Paraphrase** – Stating someone else's idea in different words.

**Perspective** – Similar to position or stance—a collection of thoughts, beliefs, and ideas about a particular subject or topic.

**Persuasion** – Convincing someone, usually through emotional appeals or intellectual argument, to see a subject in a different way.

**Plagiarism** – The act of appropriating someone else's work or citing an idea without giving credit to its originator.

**Plausibility** – Whether ideas seem reasonable and credible.

**Point of view (first person, second person, third person)** – The perspective of the essay's author—first person (the author refers to him/herself in the essay), second person (the author speaks directly to "you"), or third person (the more formal method that only uses "he," "she," and "they").

**Purpose** – The author's reason for writing, usually to express a feeling or argue a point.

**Quotations** – A source's exact words, set apart from the author's text by use of quotation marks.

**Reasons and support** – Examples, facts, and statistics given to bolster an argument.

**Subject** – The idea or argument that is the essay's focus.

**Summary** – The restatement of the main point of a cited source or, in a peer review session, all or part of a peer's essay.

**Thesis** – The main idea of the essay, stated in the introduction, supported in the body, and summarized in the conclusion.

**Topic sentence** – The first sentence of a paragraph, whose job it is to explain what the paragraph will be about.

**Transitions** – The words or phrases that help link the ideas in one paragraph to those of the next.

**Unity** – The coherence of a paragraph, where every sentence relates back to the topic sentence; or of an essay, where every paragraph relates back to the thesis.

## Peer Review

Name on paper you're evaluating:

Your Name:

### Evaluate the arguments

"a balance of generalization and specific illustrative detail"

*Are the arguments well-developed?*

*Example of effective A-P-C. If you cannot find example, give feedback on that; then below write what you see as the main points.*

### Is the paper persuasive?

"an effective use of rhetoric, including controlling tone, establishing and maintaining voice, and achieving appropriate emphasis through diction and sentence structure."

Logos

*example:*

Ethos

*example:*

Pathos

*example:*

### Diction

"a wide-ranging vocabulary used appropriately and effectively"

*Example of effective diction:*

*Suggestion(s) for improvement:*

### Sentence structure

"a variety of sentence structures, including appropriate use of subordination and coordination"

*Best sentence:*

*Improve a sentence:*

Original:

Improved:

### Organization

"logical organization, enhanced by specific techniques to increase coherence, such as repetition, transitions and emphasis"

Are the paragraphs broken up logically and effectively?

Clear introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion?

Transitional phrases and words used to connect ideas?

*Example:*

*Suggestion for improvement:*